

WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY AREA 9 (WRIA 9)



June 30, 2004

Bill Ruckelshaus
Shared Strategy for Puget Sound
1411 4th Avenue, Suite 1015
Seattle, WA 98101



Algona

Dear Mr. Ruckelshaus:

Auburn

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your work and leadership to help Puget Sound and other regions across the State address critically important needs of salmon and watersheds. We greatly appreciate your efforts to turn around the negative trends for salmon and our ecosystems.

Black Diamond

Burien

On December 18 last year, you wrote on behalf of the Shared Strategy Development Committee to ask us to consider the current direction of our local habitat planning effort to ensure it can provide the region with the technical analysis and policy consensus for recovery. You also forwarded a handout that describes the commitments the Development Committee believes are necessary from all the watersheds in Puget Sound to create a federally endorsed recovery plan that is scientifically sound, has the requisite watershed support for implementation and will improve population trends for salmon.

Covington

Des Moines

Enumclaw

Federal Way

We strongly believe that WRIA 9 is doing sound technical work to learn what it will take to achieve a viable Chinook salmon population in our highly altered watershed and from which to develop habitat management strategies. As you know, based on scientific information available now, we have undertaken many actions. Among these are ten actions we have implemented to protect the very best spawning habitat, restore key functions and processes that create habitat, and study characteristics of juvenile Chinook salmon through funding awarded to us by the State Salmon Recovery Funding Board. The \$5.75 million that WRIA 9 has secured from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board to address priority actions in the watershed is a testament to our sound technical work and strategies. The funding from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board has leveraged over \$10.8 million, providing a total of nearly \$17 million in projects for salmon in the watershed in four years.

Kent

King County

Maple Valley

Normandy Park

Renton

SeaTac

Our Near-Term Action Agenda, moreover, which is based on existing scientific information, guides all of the local governments within the watershed of 45 discreet actions that focus on salmon habitat conservation. Many additional actions have been taken as a result of the Action Agenda. Annual progress reports for 2002 and 2003 chronicle efforts by local governments, agencies, and non-profits/volunteers throughout our watershed.

Seattle

Tacoma

Tukwila

We have worked feverishly to complete our final science-based product that will be the foundation of our habitat management strategies to achieve a viable Chinook salmon population, a document called the Strategic Assessment. A major "science seminar" is being held in July at which scientists who conducted the research and analysis will give presentations on their work to our citizen-stakeholder Steering Committee. This step is critical in creating the strongest understanding possible of the science to prepare the Habitat Plan.

The Steering Committee is ramping up its schedule significantly, holding monthly meetings through the rest of the year, and possibly expanding the length of some or most of the meetings so that its work can stay on schedule. The willingness of the Steering Committee members -- many of whom are volunteering their time -- is a testament to the seriousness and dedication they have to protecting and restoring our watershed.

WRIA 9 planners and scientists have meetings scheduled in the coming months with members of the Technical Review Team and Shared Strategy to discuss technical and policy considerations of our plan. We are assisting Shared Strategy with public outreach, communications, and other components of the regional plan.

We are funding and staffing the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project. We are staffing the Lead Entity Advisory Group. We are sponsoring boat tours, field trips, workshops, legislative events, and stewardship activities. We are funding habitat restoration, protection, and research projects throughout the freshwater and marine areas of the watershed. We are promoting citizen stewardship at sites throughout the watershed. We have commenced a targeted public outreach program to obtain community input on the habitat plan. We have all of our scientific information readily available on a web site that is the number one web site on Earth when Google is queried for "salmon habitat."

The attached document further describes our response to the requests of the December 18, 2003 letter. It is organized according to the six questions that are to be answered by all watershed planning groups, including ours, by June 2004. The document has been reviewed by the WRIA 9 Watershed Forum of local governments, Steering Committee, Planning Work Group, and Technical Committee. It reflects the best answers to the questions that this watershed can provide the Development Committee at this time. Our responses to the questions include several exhibits that are existing documents providing greater detail of information (all exhibits are posted on our website).

We think that our approach to planning for salmon habitat is sound, and that we are doing everything possible to be consistent with guidance we have received and within resources provided to do the work. We set our course of action in 2001 and we are diligently sticking to it. We hope that our response to your letter is useful not only for meeting objectives for recovery at the Puget Sound regional level, but also in your work to broaden federal and state support and the support of leaders in the private sector.

Bill Ruckelshaus
June 30, 2004
Page 3 of 3

Please do not hesitate contact us if you have any questions by contacting Doug Osterman, WRIA 9 Watershed Coordinator, at 206-296-8069 or doug.osterman@metrokc.gov.

Sincerely:



Steve Mullet
WRIA 9 Forum Chair
Mayor, City of Tukwila



Rebecca Clark
WRIA 9 Steering Committee Co-Chair
Councilmember, City of Covington



Dow Constantine
WRIA 9 Steering Committee Co-Chair
Councilmember, King County

Attachment

cc: Doug Osterman, WRIA 9 Watershed Coordinator